

# Sri Lanka's MISSING MOTHERS

A working paper on the effects of Mother Migration on Children



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# PREFACE

The working paper produced by Save the Children on the effects of maternal migration on children is a timely document. The title is misleading, since it talks about 'Missing Mothers', which may create the impression that it deals with a consequence of conflict. **But the substance in fact looks at a long term issue that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.** The problems caused by migration are laid out clearly, while the document also addresses some of the causes. But it also aims 'at identifying ways to address the negative consequence of maternal migration on the children who are left behind'.

In this regard, though the study does not do this directly, it suggests the need for several initiatives to alleviate the situation. **The first is awareness,** but this in fact encompasses two distinct areas. **The first is awareness on the part of those who seek employment abroad,** as to the possible consequences of their absence from the family. But since, as the study makes clear, this 'is not a trend that will end in the near future due to the prospects for economic security', there must also be mechanisms to raise general awareness of risk situations.

I have long advocated the establishment in each Grama Niladhari Division of Protection Committees that will have vulnerability indices, so that those in positions of responsibility in the village will know who is at risk. I was pleased to discover recently, in the Eastern Province, instructions with regard to Civil Defense Committees that will cover some areas of concern. **But it is necessary that these Committees involve officials in the general administration as well as professionals (most obviously officials of the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs, but also the Women and Children's Desks of Police Stations) and also education and health authorities who will monitor the welfare and wellbeing of children.**

But awareness alone is not enough. Problems need to be dealt with professionally, and this is the second area in which heightened activity is needed. We do not have enough trained counselors in the country, nor do we have referral mechanisms and the coordination that children in need require. At its simplest, schools must have Teacher Counsellors, which in theory is the case, but their link with other **agencies with responsibilities in the field, including the Ministries of Health and of Child Development,** is not entrenched.

In addition, while curative action is important, and we need more trained professionals and better **organizational structures,** we must also think of prevention. Prevention again takes two forms. One is empowering women so as to remove or reduce the current causes of migration. The study notes that among the problems that lead women to migrate are 'high indebtedness, domestic violence and the alcohol addiction of spouses'.

The last two must be dealt with through not only awareness programs but also through active prevention through civil defense committees working in collaboration with the **Women and Children's Desks of Police Stations.** **The first** requires much more planning with regard to promoting productive employment for women, and the active encouragement of women's cooperatives together with micro-credit schemes. 2013 was supposed to be the year of value addition in agriculture, but little has been done about this. If however the Ministry, along with Ministries in charge of Small and Medium Enterprises and of Investment, took coherent action, using also **Non-Governmental Organizations and Aid Agencies,** we could see a transformation in the social structure of rural communities.

Another mechanism to prevent or reduce abuse is **empowering children.** For this purpose our

education system must do much more to promote socialization, self-confidence and initiative. I believe the Women and Children's Units that have now been set up in all Divisional Secretariats, along with the Protection Committees at village level, must also look at the local delivery of education, with a commitment to ensuring holistic education rather than book learning that entrenched dependency. Promoting extra-curricular activities, sports and cultural activities and social service, that develop character should also be a priority for all agencies working with children, and they should inspire the community to work on these lines.

An area in which both awareness and empowerment should be pursued is that of sex education, given that the study makes clear the enormous level of exploitation in this regard of the vulnerable. At many meetings with regard to the protection of children we are told of the failure of the education system to ensure that children are made aware of physical realities, and are able to discuss possible threats to their persons with both peers and professional counselors. Though an excellent syllabus with regard to Life Skills was drafted some years back, it was amended by traditionalists to leave out some important areas, while others are simply not taught because of diffidence on the part of many teachers. Even worse, Life Skills is not a popular subject at the stage at which it is most needed, given the strange decision to make history compulsory – even though

the history syllabus at Ordinary Level does not add much to what has been taught previously.

I believe it is imperative that the Ministry realizes the harm that can happen to children if they are not properly prepared, and that the material in this study will encourage it to do more to help children help themselves. But civil society can also contribute, through children's clubs, through encouragement of social movements such as Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and St. John's Ambulance Brigades, as well as activities that promote teamwork.

The study should then be used as an instrument to bring together a range of stakeholders who will push for the reforms we urgently need. I believe, given the commitment and efficiency we find in many areas, it is the failure to ensure coordination in the light of shared objectives that leads to so many problems for our people. I hope that this study will be discussed at a multi-stakeholder forum, following which concerted action will be taken to remedy the situation described.

**Professor Rajiva Wijesinha**  
Hon. Member of Parliament



# WORKING PAPER BACKGROUND

There are more than one million Sri Lankan children left behind by their mothers who have migrated overseas for employment. It is estimated that, about 75 percent women of the more than 1 million women who have migrated are married<sup>1</sup>, and around 90% of them have children<sup>2</sup>. Each migrant mother on average has left two or three children [left] behind.<sup>3</sup>

The children left behind are vulnerable to issues such as neglect, violence and abuse in the absence of their mothers. They experience emotional problems and are more likely to drop out of school.<sup>4</sup> With the steady increase<sup>5</sup> of child abuse and the violation of child rights reported daily in the country, its conceivable association with the phenomenon of mother migration cannot be ignored. This association was specifically highlighted by the Save the Children study 'Left behind, Left out' in 2006.

"Left Behind, Left Out: The Impact on Children and Families of Mothers Migrating for Work Abroad" was intended to be used by policy makers, non-governmental organizations and others as the basis for planning around issues of families left behind by migrant workers. The study was conducted using a random sample of 1,200 households of mothers who had migrated overseas for employment and had been absent from their families for over six months in the two districts with the highest incidences of female migration; Colombo and Kurunegla.

This Working Paper "Sri Lanka's Missing Mothers" conducted from June - September 2013 is designed

to show how subsequent studies have validated the Save the Children's 2006 study "Left Behind, Left Out" to the extent that mother migration has an impact on the children they leave behind. For this working paper, primary data collected from Colombo, Puttalam, Vavunia, Batticaloa and Trincomalee and secondary data extracted from surveys and research done by Save the Children in the Matara, Hambantota, Killinochchi, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya and Anuradhapura areas have been used. Other secondary data from research conducted between 2007-13 have been reviewed and used.

## MIGRANT'S DAUGHTER

A women in Puttalam recounted that when she was 11 years old her mother migrated to Kuwait. She was left in the care of her aunt after her father remarried. She never benefitted from the money her mother sent to the aunt for her care. She raped by her uncle. She was sent to a certified home in Kurunegala and taught crafts skills. After 6 years she eloped, drifted and fell into the sex trade.

This study is aimed at updating the knowledge on the issue of mother migration and the children left behind considering data and information that have come to light subsequent to the Save the Children study done in 2006. It also aims at identifying ways to address the

<sup>1</sup>Annual Statistical Report of Foreign Employment, 2000

<sup>2</sup>Save the Children Sri Lanka, LEFT BEHIND, LEFT OUT: Summary Report, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>Forgotten Families, Forgotten Children: A Research study on the Impact of Mother Migration on Children and Families of two Districts in Sri Lanka. Save the Children and Integrated Development Consultancies (PVT) Ltd. 2006 –Unpublished.

<sup>4</sup>Hettige, 1999; Athauda et al, 2000; Ratnayake, 1999; Fernando, 1989; Samarasinghe, 1989

<sup>5</sup>The total number of all crimes against children — which besides sex crimes include crimes of violence, abduction, trafficking and other offenses — increased by a dramatic 64% between 2011 and 2012. Every day, three to five children are raped in the island nation (according to Police statistics. Read more: <http://world.time.com/2013/08/13/sri-lanka-struggles-to-contain-a-growing-epidemic-of-child-abuse/#ixzz2dL0jK6F3>)

negative consequences of maternal migration on the children who are left behind.

Today, Sri Lanka is one of the largest labor exporting countries in South Asia<sup>6</sup>. The supply of Sri Lankan workers to other countries is estimated over 1.9 million people in 2010<sup>7</sup> (which has increased by 92.5% from 2003-2011). The estimate supply of migrant workers, in 2010, is equivalent to 23.8% per cent of the total labor force in Sri Lanka<sup>8</sup>

The number of female migrants has not been published by the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment (SLBFE) since 2007. The SLBFE at the end of year 2007 estimated that the female migrant workforce was 1,020,155<sup>9</sup> which is 62.1% of the total number of migrants.

The percentage of female migrants has grown from 24% of all migrants in 1986-87 to 75% in 1997. The number of men has increased since 2008 to levels that more closely reflect national demographics. In 2012, the total departures for foreign employment were 282,331, out of which 49.07% were females, according to SLBFE.

According to 2011 data published by SLBFE the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, U.A.E., Lebanon and Jordan are the top five countries to which Sri Lankan females migrate. The most common occupation for female migrants for foreign employment in 2011 was housemaid followed by, unskilled workers although there were skilled, clerical and related, middle level, semi-skilled and professional level migrants as well.

The push factors include poverty, the increasing cost of living and decreasing income earning opportunities in the country coupled with cultural marginalization and discrimination against women. Migrant mothers believe migration for work is their best chance at providing their children with a better future. It cannot be denied that migration has brought on many benefits. Migrating for work has lifted many families out of poverty through the dollar remittances the migrant workers send back to their families and communities<sup>10</sup>. Maternal migration's negative impacts on the lives of the children who are left behind make it a Faustian bargain for Sri Lanka's families.

In October 2010, the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its concluding observations on Sri Lanka<sup>11</sup>, reiterated its deep concerns about the physical, psychological and social impact that migration has on the rights and wellbeing of children left behind by migrating mothers. The Committee was also concerned of the fact that insufficient efforts have been made to create alternative working opportunities for women who have often no choice but to migrate to support their families and to address problems faced by children whose mothers are working abroad.

<sup>6</sup>H.D. Karunaratne, 'Structural Change and the State of the Labor Market in Sri Lanka' 2012.

<sup>7</sup>Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012

<sup>8</sup>Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012.

<sup>9</sup>Annual Statistical Report of Foreign Employment, 2007

<sup>10</sup>Ernesto M. Pernia 'Migration, Remittances, Poverty and Inequality: The Philippines', 2008

<sup>11</sup>UNCRC -Concluding Observations: Sri Lanka United Nations (CRC/C/LKA/3-4)

# KEY OBSERVATIONS

Maternal migration is not a trend that will end in the near future due to the prospects for economic security and a better life that women and their families see in it. Education, judicial and child protection officials however see maternal migration as the leading threat to the wellbeing of children.

Children left behind by their migrant mothers are more likely to suffer physical or sexual abuse, including incest. They are more likely to act as caregivers to family members in lieu of going to school and are at risk at assuming the conjugal role previously occupied by their mother.

The Children of migrant women are much more likely than their peers to have trouble in school. This includes poor performance in basic, foundational subjects such as math and reading, to disciplinary problems, emotional outbursts and the inability to interact with classmates and teachers in a positive and productive manner.

Some families are not ready to function with an absent mother. The husbands of migrant women are characterized by respondents as more likely to become chronic alcohol abusers, as well as more likely to engage in extramarital affairs, enter into second marriages, abandon their children or engage in child abuse.

# REASONS FOR MOTHER MIGRATION

Some feminist theorists have perceived the migration of women as a social phenomenon different to the spatial movement of men<sup>12</sup>. In Sri Lanka the patriarchal social norms, traditions and customs are a cogent ideological basis of the social construction of gender. They have fostered asymmetrical gender relations that are reflected in normative gender roles. The family, labor market and society are clearly locations of such gender inequalities<sup>13</sup> It has been claimed that the impact of market forces and globalization have increased women's access to economic resources and decision-making power, thereby weakening patriarchal power relations in families<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, the assumption that the increase in women's participation in the labor force will reduce substantially male dominance in the family has been questioned<sup>15</sup>.

Past studies and recent village level discussion and focus group discussion for this paper have revealed the reasons for migration as being: lack of access to regular and substantial income and the inability to bear the rising cost of living. In addition, some of the major aspirations of the migrant women are to build houses, collect dowry for their girl children and to educate their children. Among the specific problems of the women that force them to migrate are high indebtedness, domestic violence and the alcohol addiction of spouses<sup>16</sup>.

Research<sup>17</sup> in four locations in Colombo District and Kurunegala District (i.e. Districts with highest migration in Sri Lanka) revealed that the underlying

reasons for migration is to earn an income to escape poverty and to reach a broader goal such as family betterment (by purchasing land, building a house, paying off debt). It was also revealed that re-migration was often due to the fact that majority of the women workers found it difficult to re-adjust to family life on their return after three or four years abroad. One reason highlighted was that the family life was intolerable with an alcoholic or unfaithful husband. Others were constantly motivated to leave home in order to achieve their aspirations, which were always higher than their achievements. Thus their decision to re-migrate is almost always a unilateral decision to get away from the distressing family situation. Such women, have felt that their children were well looked after and their absence for few more years would not be detrimental to the child<sup>18</sup>.

## PUSH FACTORS

Lack of employment opportunities, poverty, poor education, lack of livelihood support, alcoholism of the husband, domestic violence, extra marital affairs of the husband, to provide for children, to pay off debt, to build a house, to save enough money to have a better future, to achieve economic and social freedom, vicious cycle of early marriage, husbands not having job opportunities and to save children's future dowry.

<sup>12</sup> Cecilia Lipszyc, ' The Feminization of Migration: Dreams and Realities of Migrant Women in Four Latin American Countries', 2004

<sup>13</sup> Swarna Jayaweera & Malsiri Dias , 'Gender roles and Support Network of the Spouses of Migrant Workers' 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, Swarna Jayaweera & Malsiri Dias, 2009

<sup>15</sup> Lourdes Beneria and Gita Sen' Accumulation, Reproduction and Women's Role in Economic Development'1997

<sup>16</sup> 'Migration of Sri Lankan Women - Analysis of Causes & Post- Arrival Assistance', Caritas Sri Lanka-CEDEC,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Swarna Jayaweera & Malsiri Dias ,2009.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Swarna Jayaweera & Malsiri Dias 2009

## PULL FACTORS

Better employment opportunities in overseas, attractive Salaries, active/deceptive advertising by recruitment agents/brokers, pre-departure loans made by agents to male family members such as husbands, extra-marital relationships of the mother where mother migrate with the partner, attitude that foreign employment can provide them a better life, motivation by friends and relatives who have migrated for work abroad, freedom and the opportunity to have exposure in a foreign land.

However as properly stated by Malsiri Dias (2001), international migration can no longer be explained by the “push/pull theories, as it has become a global export industry dominated by private recruiters, racketeers and human smugglers<sup>19</sup>. The pull factors therefore seem to be stronger as this has emerged as a lucrative trade the world over.

Some economic, political, social and cultural factors that contribute to the above mentioned pull and push factors are; economic inflation, fewer opportunities in agriculture and difficulty finding good markets to sell products (In the primary data collection it was found that, in many rural areas women tend to migrate because their families cannot survive with their main livelihood method of agriculture even though agriculture is reported as the top employment economic sector in 2012)<sup>20</sup>, introduction of new technology in agricultural field which reduced demand for human resources, collapse of garment sector and the limitation (including age limitation) of migrant women in other countries such as Bangladesh and India which took lead in initial stages of migration<sup>21</sup> and the consequences of 26 years of conflict.

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<sup>19</sup> Malsiri Dias, 'Problems of Children of Migrant workers' 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Senses and Statistics , 'Sri Lanka Labor Force Survey-Annual Report 2012, Department of Senses and Statistics',

<sup>21</sup>Thomothy Rakkee and S.K Sasikumar'Migration of Women Workers from South Asia to the Gulf' 2012

# IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Children, who are left behind by the migrant mothers, have to bear the impact of alterations in the functioning of the family. Incidents where these children have been subjected to abuse and neglect are increasingly reported in the media. The probability of a child being subjected to abuse is high if adequate arrangements for the care of the child are not made. As mentioned above, Gamburd (2000)<sup>22</sup> expressed the view that many of these problems derive from their father's poor adaptation to their new roles in the absence of their wives, although the society tend to blame migrant mothers.

The focus group discussions SCI conducted in Puttalam, Vavuniya, Batticaloa and Trincomalee indicated that fathers' adapted poorly to their new role as the sole parent of the child and his subsequent addiction to alcohol, drugs and gambling or his extramarital relationships/second marriages have distanced them from their children. This worsens the situation for children because the fathers' behavior does little to mitigate and sometimes aggravates the effects of the mothers' absence<sup>23</sup>. Studies show that children left behind by migrating mothers have poorer mental health status compared to those whose mothers are employed in Sri Lanka<sup>24</sup>.

## SEXUAL ABUSE AND INCEST

The young daughters of the migrant mothers become the substitute for the mother and are subjected to sexual abuse, rape and incest in the hands of the fathers and male relatives.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>

The absence of mothers is often cited as prime cause of incest in this country, where fathers use their young daughters to satisfy their sexual needs. Oishi Nana (2008) states when men lost their wives as sexual partners and their inability to afford to pay for professional sexual services, some of them turned to their daughters<sup>28</sup>. In a 2002 study of 22 reported incest cases, in 11 cases (50% of all cases) the mother was away in Middle East, pointing to the significance of Mother Migration as a contributory factor to trends in incest in Sri Lanka<sup>29</sup>.

Hettige's research in 1999<sup>30</sup> of 1386 households in three geographical locations found that a sizable number of older children (age 15-18) have had experienced rape or an attempted rape after the mothers departure (16% in Colombo, 28% in Mawathagama and 11 % in Weligama). The researcher had also found that in several cases, fathers were living with their daughters as husband and wife.

In *Left Behind, Left Out* (2006), ancillary to the findings from the study sample, the report noted that the research assistants had come to know of two cases of early marriages of children due to breakdown of their family lives, five cases of sexual abuse of children (perpetrator unknown), one case of resultant attempted suicide and three cases of potential suicides due to sexual abuse. These were reported by members of migrant mothers' families outside the study.

<sup>22</sup>Gamburd, Michele Ruth 'The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids' 2000.

<sup>23</sup> B.C.V. Senaratna, 'Left-behind children of migrant women: Difficulties encountered and strengths demonstrated' 2012.

<sup>24</sup> B.C.V. Senaratna, 'Mental health status of children of migrant workers in Colombo District', 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Wimala De Silva, 'The family: Continuity and Change', in *Women in Post Independent Sri Lanka*, edited by Swarna Jayaweera, 2002

<sup>26</sup> Oishi Nana, 'Family without Borders? Asian Women in Migration and the transformation of family life', 2008.

<sup>27</sup> K. Ratnayake, 'Female Migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East: Is the Remedy Worse than the Disease?', 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Oishi Nana (2008).

<sup>29</sup> K. T. Silva, D. Herath and V. Athukorala, 'Ravaged Innocence': A study of incest in Central Sri Lanka', 2002

<sup>30</sup> S.T Hettige, 'Social Impact of the Migration of Female Workers to the Middle East', report submitted to the Presidential Secretariat, 1999

A 2013 unpublished research by the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment revealed the figures relating to child abuse reported of children left behind of migrant mothers from 2009-2012 July. These figures are based on the records maintained by the women and children's Bureau of the Police.

While causality can't be established with certainty, it is significant that when considering the total number of child abuse cases being reported per district from 2009-2011, the highest number of cases have been reported from the Kurunegala District. The second highest is reported from the Gampaha

District and the third highest is from Colombo District. These are the districts with highest numbers of female migration occurs.

### FATHER AND ANOTHER ARRESTED FOR ABUSING A 7 YEAR OLD GIRL

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) of Sri Lanka has arrested a father and another individual for sexually abusing a 7 year old girl.

The victim has told her schoolteacher regarding the incident and the teacher has informed the NCPA. The girl is currently receiving treatment at Padukka Base Hospital.

It was revealed in the court that the two suspects have abused the girl in several occasions within a month.

The mother of the child is employed in a foreign country.

*Daily Mirror, 03rd June 2013.*

The Research Manager of the Bureau of Foreign Employment stated that while it can't be established as the cause of abuse, he said there is a direct connection between mother migration and incidences of child abuse. One of the key root

causes that can be seen in the child abuse cases is the unhealthy family background which is mostly prevalent with migrants' families. But further he mentioned that, in depth research has to be done to find out the relation between mother migration and child abuse.

When mother is missing the child is vulnerable to sexual abuse from the father, brothers, relations or neighbors. Save the Children research team analyses of the qualitative data collected showed that in many cases unhealthy family relationship lead mothers to migrate. So the unhealthy may exist before migration, be aggravated by migration or be caused by the migration.

### COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of the children of migrant mothers is another aspect that needs to be considered. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children is a well-organized and a concealed phenomenon in Sri Lanka. Therefore the exact assessment of the magnitude of the issues is difficult. However, the research done in the area suggests that there is a considerable number of children who are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in the country.<sup>31, 32, 33</sup>

Researchers are of the opinion that the boom in the tourist industry in the 1980's in Sri Lanka has been the main cause of sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes.<sup>34</sup> And this has resulted in the country becoming known as a destination for child sex.<sup>35, 36</sup> However similar studies have indicated that the commercial exploitation which originated due to the influx of foreign tourists is no longer confined to foreign pedophiles and that it also extends to Sri Lankans who are involved in pedophilic activities.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Protection Environment and Children Everywhere (PEACE), 'Sexually Exploited and abused children : A qualitative assessment of their health needs and services available in Sri Lanka', 1999

<sup>32</sup> T Bond, Boy prostitution in Sri Lanka, Terre Des Hommes-Lausanne, 1980.

<sup>33</sup> S.Goonesekera and L. Wanasundare, 'Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children in Sri Lanka', 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. T.Bond 1980.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. S.Goonesekera and L. Wanasundare 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Harendra De Silva, 'Some reflections on child abuse in Sri Lanka' 2000.

<sup>37</sup> S.W. Amarasinghe, 'The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Rapid Assessment', 2002

Amarasinghe's study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children in 2002<sup>38</sup> revealed that 17% of the total 120 child victims of commercial sexual exploitation were from mother migrated families. When the mother migrates for employment, often the fathers become addicted to alcohol and get involved in extra marital affairs. This in turn results in children losing the security and their education is interrupted making them more vulnerable to exploitation.<sup>39</sup>

In the 2013 SCI focus group discussions it was revealed that, children tend to engage in sexual activities when mothers are missing or as a result of being neglected. Lack of knowledge of reproductive health and exposure to opportunists were also cited.

## EARLY MARRIAGES

Early marriage is one of the most prevalent forms of child abuse that exist in Sri Lanka. During the period of this study, it was found that, early marriage is a root cause for migration, extra-marital affairs, child neglect, child abandonment, early pregnancies, institutionalization and even child abuse.

However in the Sri Lankan context, early marriages does not mean a legally contracted marriage. The General Law of the country stipulates the age of marriage as 18 years. This is applicable for all citizens except for the Muslims. For Muslims, the law does not specify a minimum age limit for marriage. Therefore in Sri Lankan early marriages is referred to the arrangement when a person below the age of 18 and another cohabitate as husband and wife.

In the areas where data was collected for this 2013 working paper, it was evident that early marriage was a relatively common phenomenon for the respondents. As it was accurately stated in Emerging Concerns and Case Studies on Child Marriage in Sri Lanka,<sup>40</sup> in some of these families, the parents too (particularly the mothers) had been

teenagers when they had got married. In these instances, the family did not challenge or resist the relationship, and sometimes even encouraged it as it would provide the girl child with socio-economic security as well as physical security.

It was revealed, during the Focus Group Discussions in the Tharinikulam in Vavuniya District the fact that some families lived in small houses where the whole family slept in one room, children were exposed from an early age to the sexual activities of their parents and others. This was seen as another factor which led to children subsequently, entering into early marriages. The problem, as the respondents themselves highlighted, was that, the parents and children have no understanding as to the consequences of early marriages.

The early marriages also have a correlation with migration. It was observed during the field visits that the girl enters into an early marriage her life becomes fraught with challenges and uncertainty. She takes on responsibilities which outweigh her level of maturity. Soon after she gives birth to at least two children. She may exercise poor judgment in financial matters due to inexperience. She may enter into an extramarital relationship. It becomes difficult for her to provide for her family. The household and marriage become a source of stress and unhappiness. The women is overwhelmed by responsibilities that she is poorly prepared to meet. In addition the choice of spouse may not have been ideal leaving her in a relationship with a man who may be abusive, unfaithful, have a drinking problem or fail to provide for the family. She is tempted by prepaid wages or stories of women garnering money and independence as migrant workers. The decision to leave her family to migrate for work appears to her to be the most viable alternative.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, S.W.Amarasinghe, 2002

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. S.W.Amarasinghe, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> S. Goonesekera and H. Amarasuriya , 'Emerging Concerns and Case Studies on Child Marriage in Sri Lanka', 2013.



## ABANDONMENT

The Focus Group Discussions revealed that sometimes migration was chosen by mothers as a method to abandon their children (and the families), in the face of problems in the home. Sometimes this is because she has a new lover. Sometimes it is just to escape from poverty's daily grind.

The focus group participants and key informants said that some returning migrant mothers find it difficult to re-adjust to their family life. In such instances, after their return, mothers flee to some other areas to start afresh abandoning their children as well as the husbands for good.

Another instance where children are abandoned is when the caregivers, often the grandparents, friends or relatives accepts the responsibility to look after the children prior to mother's departure but subsequently finds it difficult to honor the commitment. In such instances, the children are brought to the police or probation offices with the request to provide the children with institutional care.

## CHILD TRAFFICKING

The report on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment including Sexual Exploitation-2006 stated that 'all surveys indicate that children whose mothers have gone abroad for work are most at risk of being abused or trafficked. Such children are used for work in 'waaadiyas' (where small industries such as dry fish manufacturing is conducted), salterns, shops, garages, domestic service and commercial sex work.

It was reported on The Sunday Times Newspaper on August 23, 2009<sup>41</sup> that "Young girls from the Eastern province, especially Trincomalee and Batticaloa, were sent to Middle East countries as housemaids with forged documents prepared

by child brokers." The Focus Group Discussions in Tharinikulam revealed that 25% of the total migrants from that Division of Vavuniya District were persons below the age of 18. In Batticaloa, the key informant- representative of the Save the Children Partner organization, AHAM said, there are many instances where persons below the age of 18 migrate for work.

### FATHER AND AUNT ARRESTED

A child aged 5 from Bandarawela, who was sexually abused and tortured died of an infection as a result of not receiving timely treatment

His father and a paternal aunt were arrested in relation to this. The mother has gone abroad after finding out the father of this child is previously married.

The aunt has admitted this child to the hospital saying the child has been attacked by bees.

*Rivira newspaper of 27th February 2013*

## PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

In the Left behind, Left Out (2006) study, the study sample did not indicate high levels of violence by fathers against children, dislodging the negative perception of fathers as fundamentally abusive in the absence of the mother. The Levels of corporal punishment by the Primary Caregiver were similar in migrant and non-migrant households

Newly born children of returned migrant workers also face a more peculiar threat to their personal security. This is because most fathers and relatives believe these children are illegitimate as they suspect that migrant mother has had extra marital

<sup>41</sup> The Sunday Times, 'Children up for sale', Sunday August 23, 2009

affairs abroad.<sup>42</sup> Children of migrant mothers face discrimination because they are labelled as illegitimate by the fathers, relatives, school and community believing that these children are born out of migrant mother's extra marital affairs abroad.<sup>43</sup>

## IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

In analyzing admissions to a pediatric ward, Vijitha Fernando in 1989<sup>44</sup> found that diseases did not differ between children with migrant mothers and at home mothers. However the children of migrant mothers had more frequent relapses and erratic long-term recovery due to poor adult supervision. In interviewing doctors, the authors found out that clinic visits for these children were less frequent.

Another Study by Athauda and Fernando published in 2002<sup>45</sup> conducted to assess the morbidity patterns among the pre-school children of migrant mothers in Colombo District revealed that children with mothers working overseas had the highest mean number of illness episodes and a risk of getting an episode 1.8 times higher than the other children. This was because the children with migrant mothers seemed to have faced more unfavorable circumstances than their counter parts in the other two groups (i.e. children with mothers employed in Sri Lanka and mothers not formally employed). As a contributory factor to morbidity of the children, the study found that, the group with migrant mothers had more garden pollution with feces (46.7%) and overcrowding (54.7%) as most of them were living with relations, sharing their houses.

The same study<sup>46</sup> revealed that, out of the total test sample of 137 children of migrant mothers, 22.8% have been left while they were infants. This was, according to the authors, unsatisfactory considering the type of physical care a young child would need unless adequate arrangements for child care is made,

taking into notice the non-availability of established child care arrangements in the country.

Soyza and Demel in a study in 1986<sup>47</sup> looked at the problems of Mother Migration by probing into the records or the admissions to the Children's Hospital (Colombo). They found a higher incidence of moderate and severe malnutrition among children of this category as compared with other admissions As Fernando (1989) points out, one of the main cause of morbidity and malnutrition was caused by sudden termination of breast feeding<sup>48</sup> Hettige's study in 1999<sup>49</sup> confirmed Fernando's 1989 finding that some young children had lost considerable weight within the first month of the mother's departure

## IMPACT ON PSYCHOLOGY, DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

By using a validated behavioral checklist, Athauda, Fernando and Nikapota (2000)<sup>50</sup> found by studying 511 preschoolers that bed wetting, sleepwalking, clinging to care takers, temper tantrums and poor relationships with siblings were significantly more common among children of migrant mothers.

According to the findings of the Left Behind, Left Out (2006), caregivers have revealed that they observed certain negative behavior in children after the departure of the mother although not in a majority; 22.1% of children under the age of 5 showed loss of appetite and 5% in the same age group showed weight loss. On average, around 20% of children in all ages showed increased temper tantrums after the departure of the mother. Temper tantrums were higher in the adolescent age groups, a naturally "rebellious" phase where stubbornness and disobedience is already strong. Around 10% of older children (15-18 years) showed lower concentration levels.

<sup>42</sup> Kill : Indrani Kusumalatha, President – Praja Diriya Padanama , Puttalam ,September 2, 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Kill:Indrani Kusumalatha,Puttalam.

<sup>44</sup> V.Fernando, 'The physical, psychological and social impact on Children in the Migrant House Maid' 1989.

<sup>45</sup> T. Athauda and D. Fernando, 'Morbidity patterns among pre-school children of migrant mothers in Sri Lanka', 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid Athauda and Fernando,2002.

<sup>47</sup> P.Soyza and T.D.Mel, 'Problems of Migrant families as studies among hospital admissions',1986.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. V.Fernando,1989

<sup>49</sup> S.T Hettige, 'Social Impact of the Migration of Female Workers to the Middle East', 1999.

<sup>50</sup> T.Athauda, D.Fernando and A.Nikapotha, 'Behavioral problems among Pre-School Children of Migrant mothers in Sri Lanka', 2000.

A 2009 Study<sup>51</sup> on the psychological and social status of 162 primary school children (Age 7-10 years from the Borella educational division of Colombo educational zone) has revealed that most of the children of migrant mothers do not appear to cooperate with other class mates, they quarrel with their peers, fail to excuse themselves when they make mistakes, are unruly in the classroom and do not like to work with other children.

The study also showed that most of these children with migrant mothers remained isolated. They exhibited aggressive behavior and were found to be quick to lose their temper and fight with classmates when they faced a problem. They also lacked self-confidence and leadership qualities.

Also it was found that about 90% of the children of migrant mothers sought help from teachers and peers even when not necessary.<sup>52</sup>

The 2009<sup>53</sup> study mentioned above revealed that psychological development of children of migrant mothers were also very low when compared to other groups of children with non-migrant employed mothers and non-migrant non employed mothers.

In a focus group discussion with the principle and a teacher in Nellikulam GTMS, Batticaloa they mentioned that, children of migrant mothers show behavioral changes such as not concentrating in school activities, tension, violence, being introvert and emotionally disturbed.

## IMPACT ON EDUCATION.

In a study by Rathnayake in 1999 of 104 female migrant returnees from Matara and Galle Districts found that nearly 28% of the children left behind by migrant mothers did not regularly attend school. According to her findings, the main reason for irregular attendance of these children was that the older children had to care for younger siblings at home

Hettige's research in 1999 of 1,386 households in three geographical locations also revealed that the migrant's daughter to be the main caregiver (59% in Colombo, 47% in Mawathagama, and 61% in Weligama) and this meant that they may have foregone their own education in order to take care of their siblings.

In the Left Behind, Left Out (2006), a comparative analysis was conducted of school attendance and performance of 50 children each (150 in all) from three groups comprising children of migrant mothers, children with mothers working in Sri Lanka, and children of non-working mothers all from the same socioeconomic background. Educational performance was assessed through an assessment of subject scores at end of last semester examinations in the three subjects regarded as critically important for purposes of measuring achievement: namely the Mother Tongue, Mathematics and English. Their school attendance was assessed through school registers for the last semester. Educational performance of children left behind was clearly lower than that of the two control groups; The highest proportion of children obtaining the lowest scores in all three subjects were children of migrant mothers and the highest proportion of children obtaining the highest bracket of scores (over 75) were children of working mothers. A clear pattern was seen for subject scores with the "middling" scores being obtained by children of non-working mothers. The trends for Mother Tongue and English were similar to the trends in the Mathematics. While the absence of the mother was not the only reason for poor attendance and performance, this clearly had an impact on education when compared to the other two groups of children who were also from the same socio-economic background of poverty. The study also revealed that the highest percentage of attendance at schools was by children of working mothers, followed closely by those of non-working mothers and then by children of the migrants. The

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<sup>51</sup> Samantha Jayasinghe, 'A study on the Social and Psychological Status of Primary School Children of Employed Migrant Mothers', 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid Samantha Jayasinghe, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid Samantha Jayasinghe, 2009.

study had found sufficient evidence to conclude that migration of the mother (or the absence of the mother) has had a decidedly negative impact on children's performance and an impact on school attendance.

The 2009 Study<sup>54</sup> revealed that that 75% of the children of migrant mothers needed help for class work from teachers and children in the neighborhood. For instance when the teacher explained and requested them to do an exercise in the class they asked again and again what the teacher wanted them to do. Nearly 60% had the habit of loitering in the classroom when teacher was teaching; 50% argued with their teacher, 88% failed to attend to their homework; and they seem to demand sympathy from others.

Among the barriers to children's school attendance and performance are lack of parental encouragement for children to attend school regularly. This is tied to migration of mothers for temporary employment overseas, fathers' alcoholism, neglect of children, and consequent emotional distress suffered by children.<sup>55</sup>

The UNICEF country study indicated that there are currently no policies targeting the educational

vulnerabilities of children whose mothers have migrated for labor purposes. This is an obvious policy gap, and again could be address through linking policies on social protection to the education of children with migrant mothers, benefiting children mostly in Dimension who have fallen out of school because of family dysfunction.

Although special assistance is provided for children of female migrant domestic workers who have qualified for the Grade 5 scholarship, children of other migrant female workers are vulnerable to dropping out. The National Policy on Labor Migration 2009 also addresses this issue; it proposes a registration and monitoring system that tracks all children of migrant workers at divisional level, and provides support services and benefits to children and families in distress and to neglected and abused children.<sup>56</sup>

In many focus group discussions it was revealed that, some children of migrant mothers get burdened with family responsibilities including cooking, taking care of young siblings and taking care of sick grandparents which make them late to school or leads to dropping out of school

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid Samantha Jayasinghe, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> UNICEF, Country Study: Out of School Children in Sri Lanka, 2013

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, UNICEF, Country Study: Out of School Children in Sri Lanka, 2013.

# CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Maternal migration is an attractive short term solution and potential economic boon for an impoverished family. However, for all its economic benefits it has serious deleterious effects on the wellbeing of children in Sri Lanka. Children are at a disadvantage at all levels and in all aspects of their existence. Children of Missing Mothers are more likely to be ill, more likely to have emotional issues that they act out, they are more likely to be abused, they are more likely to become surrogate caregivers or spouses, they are more likely to drop out of school and they are more likely to be trafficked.

There is little to suggest that the ill-effects of maternal migration will outweigh its attractiveness to poor women who find themselves trapped in cycles of hardship, abuse and uncertainty. The standards for recruitment and migration have legal and regulatory solutions. These measures include strict enforcement of the minimum age requirement, anti-infant abandonment measures, truth in advertising, transparency in contracting, awareness raising regarding migrant rights. But, as long as there are poor women who are unable to meet the standards for migration, there will be brokers who will prey on them.

Therefore Save the Children offers recommendations that are focused on the wellbeing of the children of Sri Lanka's Missing Mothers.

Enforcement of existing strictures on maternal migration such as the regulation against women with children under three years old migrating. This would involve either making the violation of the regulation a criminal offense or more aggressively enforcing the secondary crime of forgery and potentially trafficking.

Putting a mechanism in place to monitor the wellbeing of the children left behind: This would

include setting up a database at the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment for the children of migrant mothers. Include a mechanism to monitor the care plans that mothers prepare for SLBFE prior to migrating.

Relevant authorities such as the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment, the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), and the National CRC Monitoring Committee should coordinate efforts to support families of migrant mothers.

In line with the UN CRC observations: Set up a special desk/help desk to register details of children of the migrating mothers at the international airport, so that the unregistered mother's children would be also recorded to monitoring purposes: this desk can raise awareness among the migrating mothers at the airport by distributing leaflets and other awareness raising materials/ sign boards.

Good practices of the SLBFE, Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare, Non-governmental organizations and others should be documented and replicated throughout the country.

## FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES:

Government authorities should establish mechanisms to monitor the activities of the foreign employment agencies at community level, as they tend to lure mothers of young children to migrate using unethical practices.

Ban recruitment agencies/brokers from providing pre-departure money advances, as this is a typical mechanism used to entrap mothers to migrate

SLBFE training for foreign employment currently only contains one day addressing family issues. This needs to be expanded to cover child protection, services available, financial and household management.

## SCHOOLS

Sensitize the school staff and the administrators to recognize and address the acting out and other behaviors associated with children feeling abandoned or otherwise effected by the absence of the mothers.

Strengthen the School Development Societies and PTAs at schools and encourage fathers' participation, in order to prevent children left behind dropping out of school by making available the means to keep the fathers' involved in the child's education.

Awareness raising of children on child abuse and on how to report incidents of child abuse and the services available at community level for children.

Train teachers to improve the reproductive health teaching in schools which would also cover issues faced by children of migrant mothers such as early marriages, incest and child abuse.

Immediate material support available for the children of migrant mothers who are vulnerable to school drop outs.

Strengthening counseling services available for children who have been left behind by migrant mothers.

Strengthen and support the establishment of school child protection committees (as per the government circular) in schools to monitor also the children of migrant mothers.

Extracurricular activities after school, managed by school or children's clubs after school so that children will be together in a protective environment. This is important for children of migrant mothers especially because, it is revealed that in the absence of the mothers, children left behind are mostly abused at home.

The Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare, with the support of Divisional Secretariat

offices and the District Child Development Committees, should lead initiating locally relevant childcare support mechanisms such as drop-in/ daycare centers and ensuring better use of existing community-level networks. Special support schemes on early childhood development should be set up for children under six years of age. Maintaining a day care center where working parents can leave their children in a healthy background which will help the children to grow physically and psychologically.

## COMMUNITY LEVEL:

Awareness raising for parents on positive parenting, identifying and preventing child abuse, with special focus to mothers who plan to migrate.

Sensitize the already existing DCDC's DivMRCs and VCDC's on the impacts of mother migration to identify children at risk.

Promote an attitudinal change in child protection to improve the dialogue on child protection within the communities affected by mother migration.

Provide access to counseling for children of mother migrants

Community-level support groups should be encouraged by Child Rights Promotion Officers (CRPOs) and other relevant social welfare officers specially to support children, fathers and primary caregivers facing problems resulting from mothers' migration.

Use institutionalization of children of migrant workers a-only as a measure of last resort and only for short time periods.

# ANNEXURE - A

## THE STUDY: OBJECTIVE & METHODOLOGY

### OBJECTIVE:

Mother Migration is a problem in Sri Lanka and its impacts on the children are deleterious. Building on the Save the Children's study titled 'Left Behind, Left out' of 2006, the present study is aimed at:

- 1) Identifying the reasons for mothers to migrate abroad for employment leaving their children behind
- 2) Identifying the impacts on children the children left behind by the mothers who migrate. The overall objective of this study is to promote policy level dialogue on the issue of mother migration and its negative impacts on the children and to draw up few concrete recommendations on how Save the Children can address the problem

### METHODOLOGY:

The study takes the form of a qualitative research and depends on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) which are both primary and secondary.

- ~ Primary Data - These are the data collected by the researchers during field visits to the study locations through Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews.
- ~ Secondary Data - These are the data that were available with Save the Children that were collected through Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews for the Child Rights Situation Analysis in Sri Lanka in May-June 2013.

A literature review was also undertaken for this study, prior to engaging in the data collection process, to assist the researchers to understand the nature of the problems that are to be explored.

Qualitative method was used in this study as it was believed that the qualitative method was most suitable as the study requires the understanding of relationships, thinking patterns and emotions of the informants in the context of the social and cultural background of the study locations. It was also believed that a collection of numerical data in a quantitative method would defeat the objective of the study.

### DATA SAMPLE:

Data was collected through face to face Focus Group discussions and Key Informant Interviews.

	Data collection method	Primary Data	Secondary Data
1	Focus Group Discussions	8	16
2	Key Informant Interviews	18	14
	Total	26	30

The total number of informants of the primary data was 126 people and the total number of informants of the secondary data amounted to 269. Therefore the total number of informants for this study amounts to 395.

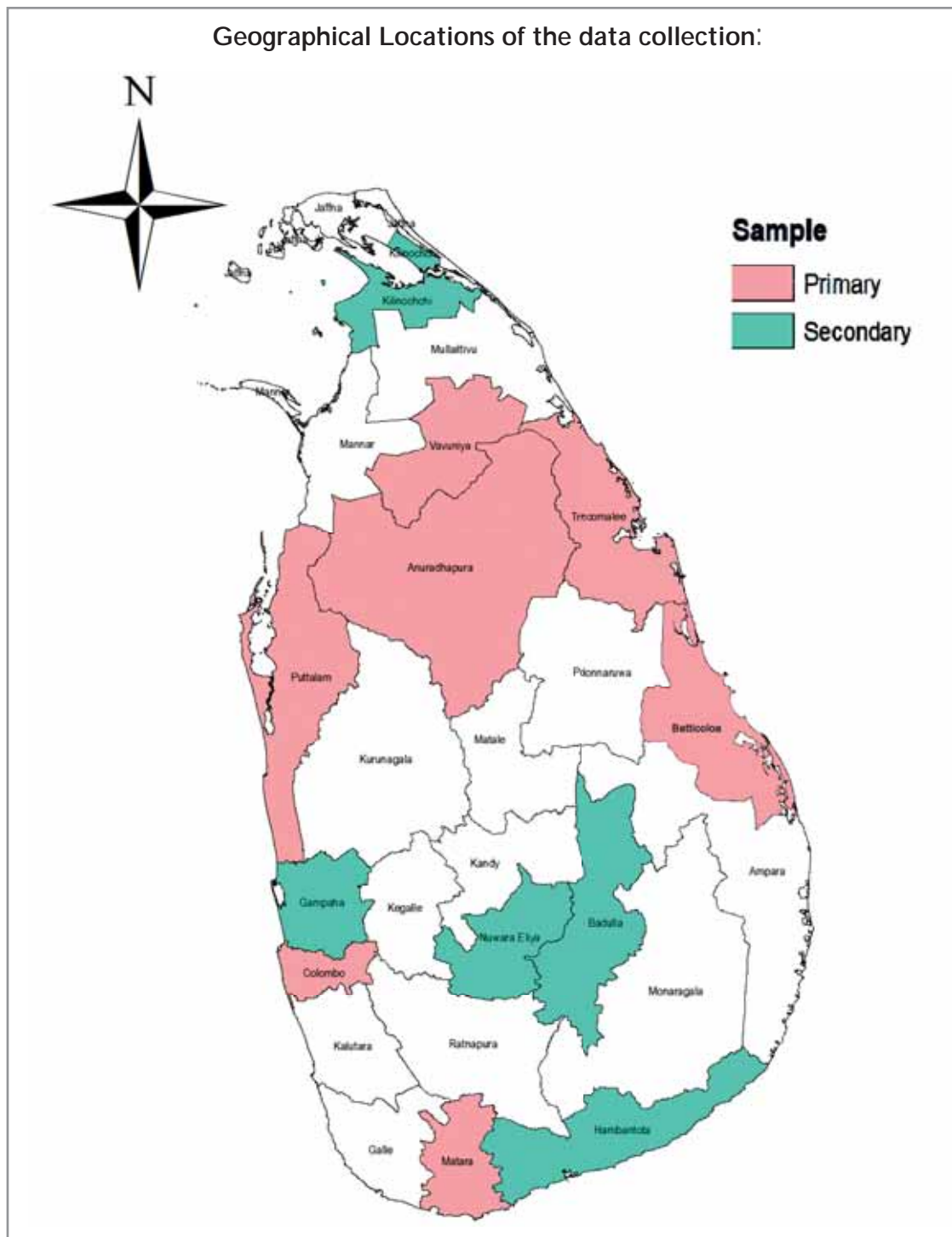
This study adopted the judgment sampling technique (also known as the purposive sampling technique) and the sample included Children, youth, Government Child Protection Officers, Government Foreign employment promotion officers, Teachers, Parents, caregivers, Sex workers, Police Officers, Community based organizations, clergymen, members of Local NGOs, Returned migrants, mothers applied to go abroad, Health workers, villagers, members of child protection working groups, Save the children project staff and a recruitment agent.

According to the sample size calculation (STATA), the required sample size for 95% precision is 384 (against the National Population Size of 20,328,000 in Sri Lanka). The total sample of the present study is 395, therefore has exceeded the minimum sample size for 95% accuracy.

The study areas for the primary data collection were randomly selected and intended to cover all the cultural and geographical variations within the country. The locations where the data was collected are shown below:

	District	FGDs	KII	TOTAL	Percentage from the total data collection
1	Colombo	2	1	3	5.36 %
2	Puttalam	2	2	4	7.14 %
3	Gampaha	1	2	3	5.36 %
4	Matara	3	2	5	8.93 %
5	Hambantota	0	4	4	7.14 %
6	Kilinochchi	3	0	3	5.36 %
7	Vavuniya	8	2	10	17.86 %
8	Batticaloa	5	7	13	23.21 %
9	Trincomalee	1	1	2	3.57 %
10	Badulla	1	1	2	3.57 %
11	Nuwara Eliya	5	1	6	10.71 %
12	Anuradhapura	1	0		1.79 %
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>56</b>	<b>100 %</b>





## DATA ANALYSIS:

The data collected through the FGDs and the KIIs were qualitatively analyzed to answer the two research questions:

- 1) What are the reasons for Mother Migration in Sri Lanka?
- 2) What are the impacts on children the children left behind by the mothers who migrate?

The Data was then coded manually in two stages.

During the first stage all the answers given to the first question: “what are the reasons for mother migration in Sri Lanka” were analyzed. Each reason given by the informants was allocated a different code. A total

of 22 reasons were coded. These codes were then used to find how many times the informants (through all FGDs & KIIs) repeated the same reason. The number of times the informants repeated the each reason or the frequency each reason was highlighted was used to measure the significance of that reason. This significance so calculated is shown as a percentage of the total reasons in the Findings – See Annexure B

The assumption used to ascertain the significance is:

$$\boxed{\text{Most number of times a reason was mentioned by the informants (Frequency)}} = \boxed{\text{Significance of that reason}}$$

In the Stage two, the same process was used to analyze the answers given to the second question: “what are the impacts on children” and to find the significance of each impact identified by the informants of this study.

## LIMITATIONS:

The data collection for this study was limited to identifying the reasons for mother migration and its impacts on the children who are left behind by these migrant mothers. The sample of this study is purposively selected by the researchers thus should not be considered as representing entire population of the country.

One of the major limitation is that the formula used to analyze the data: “Most number of times a reason was mentioned by the informants(Frequency) is an implication of its significance” is an assumption which is able to be rebutted.

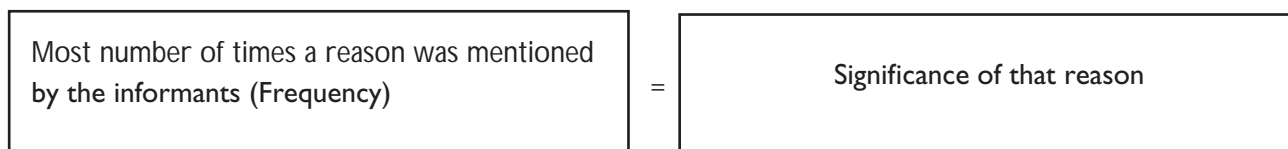
Another challenge faced by the study was the lack of records or database of the children left behind by the migrant mothers and the mothers migrate each year.

# ANNEXURE - B

## PART A: Reasons for Mothers Migration

The Focus Group Discussions and the Key Informant Interviews (both Primary and Secondary) used in this study highlighted a total of 22 reasons why mothers migrate from Sri Lanka, leaving their children behind.

Based on the assumption that:



	Reasons	Frequency the Reason was mentioned by the informants (%)
1	Poverty	58.93
2	Lack of IGA/employment opportunities	39.29
3	Money advances from Agents/sub agents	30.36
4	Family disputes/ problems	28.57
5	Domestic violence	21.43
6	Problems arising out of early marriages	19.64
7	Alcohol addiction of the husband	19.64
8	Insufficient Husbands Income	17.86
9	to find freedom	12.50
10	Women Headed households	12.50
11	widowed due to war	12.50
12	Break down of marriage	10.71
13	Migration as a trend	10.71
14	To build house/ improve family	10.71
15	Husbands lack of commitment to family	8.93
16	To support the children's education/ future	8.93
17	Lack of education and awareness	8.93
18	Influence from returnees/brokers/Agencies	7.14
19	Pay debts	7.14
20	Extra marital affairs of either spouse	7.14
21	Drug addiction of Husband	5.36
22	Dowry for the daughter	3.57

Diagram 1

Accordingly, the most significant reasons for migration are:

- Ã **Poverty:** This refers to, according to the context of the study, the person's or the families' low income and their inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. The term in this context encompassed, among others low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, social exclusion and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.
- Ã **Lack of income generation Activities & employment opportunities** was the second most highlighted reason for mother migration from the study locations. As majority of the people in these areas were seasonal farmers, the introduction of machinery to farming has caused most of these people to become redundant and lose their only source of income. Sometimes they were unable to farm because of the lack of proper irrigation. Most suggested the establishment of factories in the areas to generate employment.
- Ã **Money advances from Agents/sub agents-** were seen as the third significant reason for mother migration. Agents/their brokers are in the practice of lending money to the poor women in villages in the pretense of being helpful at times of need. Then when these women fail to repay these monies, they are forced to go abroad to earn and repay what was borrowed. Women fall into debt because of these money advances- earning money to pay off debts is also another significant reason why mothers migrate from Sri Lanka.
- Ã **Family Disputes/problems;** This reason was often interlinked with alcohol/drug addictions of the husband, problems resulting out of early marriages, problems due to extramarital affairs of either spouse which were separately enlisted herein as reasons. The family disputes, in the context of the Sri Lankan "collectivist" society also mean disputes among relatives (who sometimes cohabit). It is noteworthy that the connected problem of Domestic Violence was the next most significant reasons for mothers to migrate.

Although reasons like poverty; lack of income generating activities and employment opportunities, family disputes, to pay off debts remained equally significant in all districts studied, there were reasons peculiar to Vavuniya, Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts.

These peculiar reasons, which were resultant due to the 30 year old civil war in the Northern Parts of the country, were:

1. The mother being a war widow- the loss of the breadwinner of the family place upon the surviving mother the additional burden of providing for the family.
2. Female headed household- this is when the fathers abandons the family or become ill, disabled or incapable of earning.
3. As the prevailing culture in the areas practice giving a dowry for girl children at the time of their wedding, one of the reported reasons why women migrate from these areas was to find dowry for their daughters.

## PART B : Impacts of Mother Migration on children.

	Reasons	Frequency the Reason was mentioned by the informants (%)
1	School drop outs	35.71
2	Get neglected	32.14
3	increased vulnerability due to lack of care and protection	<b>28.57</b>
4	early marriages	25.00
5	child labor	23.21
6	sexual abuse	21.43
7	Less interest in Education	<b>17.86</b>
8	Incest	14.29
9	Burden with family problem	12.50
10	Poor hygiene	10.71
11	Institutionalization	10.71
12	delinquent behaviors	<b>8.93</b>
13	drug/ alcohol addictions	<b>8.93</b>
14	Psychological problems	<b>8.93</b>
15	Affairs/relationships with the opposite sex	7.14
16	Early pregnancies	7.14
17	physical abuse	5.36
18	Disobedient/ stubbornness	5.36
19	Prostitution/sex workers	3.57
20	Discriminated by school	3.57
21	Malnutrition	1.79
22	Suicide	1.79

Diagram 2

According to the findings of this study, the highest reported impacts on children upon the mother migration were as below:

- Ã Children dropping out of school was the highest reported by the informants and it was reported in **35.71%** of the total Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews (both primary and Secondary) considered in this report. Dropping out of school was commonly linked with other reasons enlisted herein such as getting neglect, losing interest in education, being burdened with family problems/responsibilities etc.
- Ã Children getting neglected upon the migration of mothers were the second highest reported impact of mother migration on children. The focus group discussions and the interviews have all revealed that it the neglect of children that provide incentive for other evils to take place for children. For instance

when a child is neglected at home, it was said that the children are more susceptible to child abuse, poor hygiene, malnutrition, early marriages, drop-outs and even institutionalization.

- Ã Children becoming increasingly vulnerable due to the lack of care and protection can be considered as the third most significant impact on children of mother migration. The informants all were of the opinion that mothers are the best line of protection available in the Sri Lankan society for children and in their absence children fall prey for the all social evils. In connection with the increased vulnerability of the children left behind, the informants often was the opinion that it was this reason that subjected these children to sexual and physical abuse, father-daughter incest and to become trafficked for child labor and commercial sexual exploitation.
- Ã Early Marriages was the next most significant resultant impact of mother migration. Although referred to as “marriages” these are social arrangements entered into by children who are aged 13-18 years. These children elope with their boyfriends or with the consent of the caregivers move out of the house and start living together with their boyfriends. As the legal age for marriage is set at 18 years, these unions are considered illegal and are considered child abuse in Sri Lanka. Early marriages not only jeopardize a girl child’s opportunities to improve her well-being it also jeopardize their health as often early marriages results in early pregnancies and it inadvertent health risks. Children arising out of these unions are considered illegitimate children and often discriminated by the society and when this union fails, the young wives are considered a shame to the family and marginalized by the society. Also, the anecdotal information suggested that early marriages operate as a vicious cycle fueling the mother migration phenomena - when the parents marry early and have children early, they lack the necessary maturity to look after children, manage finances and maintain a family, these families were reported to be more likely to break down or have problems due to extra-marital affairs and alcoholism. To avoid the hardships of an early marriage, women migrate, hoping to earn enough money to improve their lives, their children becomes neglected, drops out of school and enter into early marriages and the cycles continues. This was widely seen in the study locations.
- Ã Child Labor was highlighted as the next most significant impact on children of mother migration. Child labor in the context of the locations studied included all forms such as selling fruits on the side of the main road, selling souvenirs to foreigners, working in shops, coolie work, domestic servants and child prostitutes. Left behind children are often trafficked for child labor from these locations by brokers and other times are forced to earn money by the caregivers. Very rarely children engage in these activities with their own will.

# ANNEXURE - C

## PROFILE OF MOTHER MIGRATION IN SRI LANKA

### OVERVIEW OF THE LABOR MIGRATION IN SRI LANKA

The beginning of labor migration in Sri Lanka can be traced back to the first half of the 20th Century, under the British colonial rule, when Sri Lankan Tamils migrated to Malaysia in small numbers, primarily to work in British-owned rubber plantations. The available data suggests that the early migrants, post-independence in 1948, were professionally qualified members of Sri Lanka's English speaking elite who felt their best prospects lay with taking up citizenship in Anglophone countries. The departure of doctors, engineers, accountants was accelerated with the deterioration in political and economic conditions during the 1970s and the 1980s and with the outbreak of the civil war in 1982.

The labor migration as we know it today, began with the growth of the Middle Eastern labor markets. This has brought about the profound impacts on Sri Lanka's economy and society over the past three decades. The oil price boom of the 1970s generated a massive flow of petro-dollars into the oil exporting countries of the Middle East under the umbrella of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) providing a powerful stimulus to their domestic economies. Labour shortages in these countries had an immediate impact on international migration by transforming them into a virtual open market for migrant labour. They needed different types of labor (skilled and unskilled) and expertise from other countries to meet the demands of their developmental projects. This in turn afforded an opportunity for the labor surplus countries in Asia like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines and India to enter the Middle Eastern Employment market by supplying labor. The increase in out migration from Sri Lanka received a further boost with the government's policy changes to speed up the economic growth in the country, such as the relaxation of travel and exchange rate restrictions under the country's economic liberalization program of 1977/78.

These policy changes also offered new economic opportunities for women, single as well as married women, one of which was the opportunity to be a primary wage earner working as a housemaid in the Middle East. The huge difference between local wages and wages offered by overseas employment encouraged those women among the poorest strata of Sri Lanka to migrate.

Sri Lanka was referenced in a 2012 UNWOMEN report as the only country in South Asia where the share of female migrants outnumbered that of the male migrants, this was in 2009 when females accounted for 52 percent of the total labor outflow.

The Sri Lankan government in the past promoted female migration, unlike other South Asian countries like Bangladesh and Nepal which have imposed many restrictive conditions on female migration. The Sri Lankan economy depends heavily on the remittance of migrant workers (of which large part is women). It is the country's second largest source of foreign exchange and represents 30% of national savings.

It is reported that migrants' rights groups in Sri Lanka have accused the Sri Lankan government of taking a "commodity supply approach," characterized by the formula "select, train, pack, insure, and export," with the imperative to protect workers noticeably absent.

Sri Lanka has made a significant achievement in human development and poverty reduction. However, income inequality and the lack of viable opportunities have sustained and intensified labor outflows from Sri Lanka

Because of the migrant workers great contribution to the Sri Lankan economy, the Sri Lankan government has given them the honorary name of “RATA VIRUWO” which means ‘nation’s heroes’ in Sinhala.

However over the past year the government has made moves to further protect migrant mothers such as restricting the movement of women who might leave small children at home and providing help desk services.

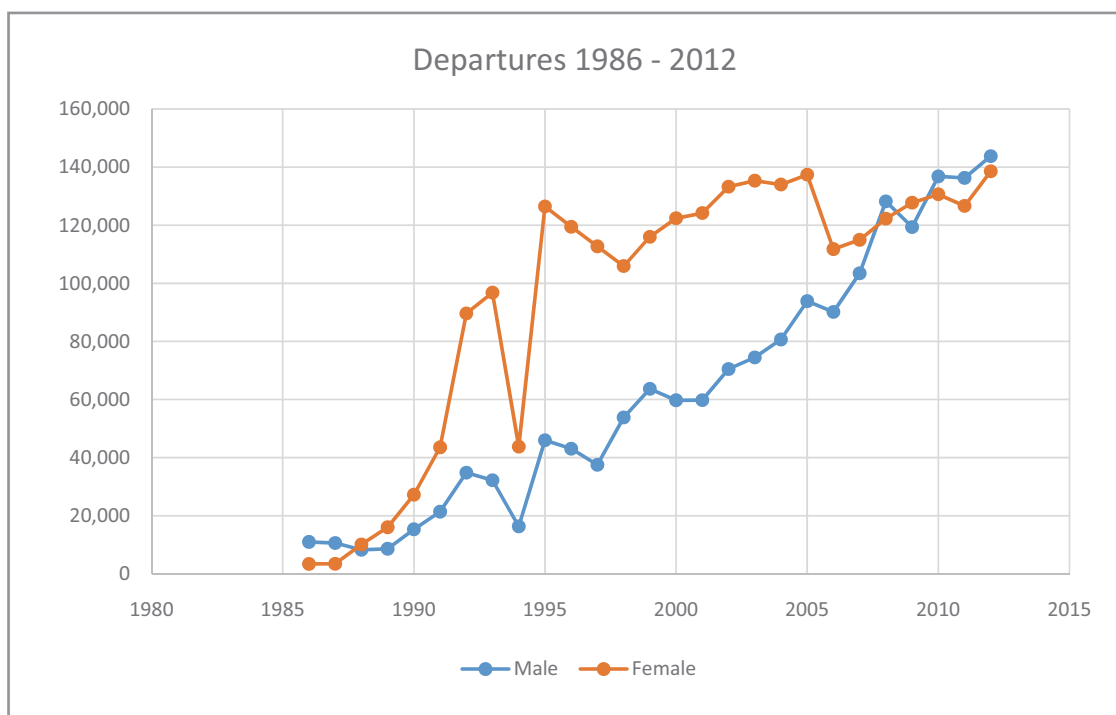
## PRESENT SITUATION

Today, Sri Lanka is one of the largest labor exporting countries in South Asia. The stock of Sri Lankan workers in other countries is estimated over 1.9 million people in 2010 (which has increased by 92.5% from 2003-2011- see table I). Thus the estimate stock of migrant workers, at 2010, is equivalent to 23.8% per cent of the total labor force in Sri Lanka.

The number of female migrants has not been published by the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau since 2010. Although requested, updated information was not provided by officials to the authors while preparing the working paper. At the end of year 2007, there was an estimate stock of 1,020,155 female migrant workers (62.1% of the total migrant number).

According to the Annual Statistical Report of the SLBFE of 2007, 49.3% out of the total Sri Lankan overseas contact employees were housemaids- and were females. Only 12.7 of the total migrant stock accounted females of other manpower level categories (i.e. Professional, Middle ,clerical ,skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled)

The departure to foreign employment has increased by 7.36% from 2011. In year 2012, the total departures for foreign employment were 282331, out of which 49.07% were females.



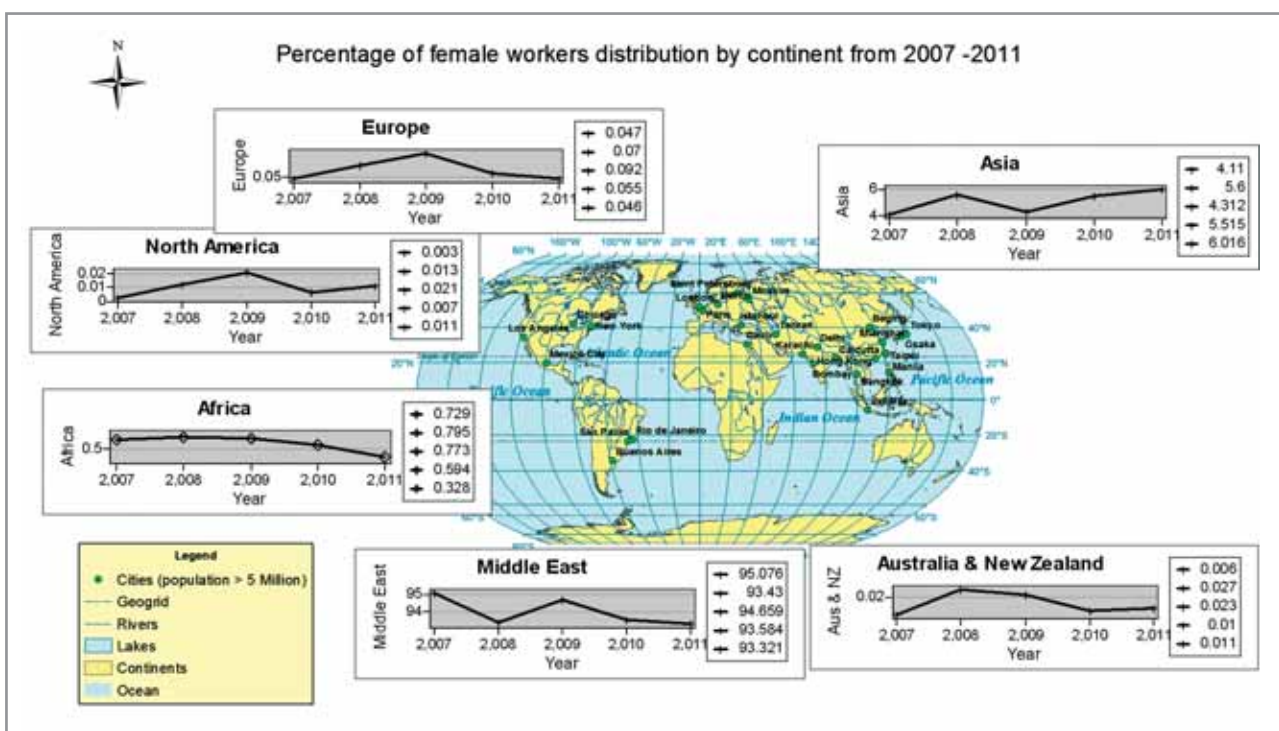
Source: Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment- Annual statistical Report 2013 (unpublished)



The share of females which was 24 percent for the period of 1986-87, had increased from 49 percent in 1988 to 75 percent in 1997. This gradually decreased up to 48.81 from 1998-2008. There was a sudden increase by 2.88 percent in 2009. During the period of 2010-2011 the percentage remained at 48% with a slight decrease. The unpublished data of the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment of 2012 suggest that the percentage of female departures has again increased in 2012 up to 49.07 percent indicating the possibility of the numbers of female migration in the 2013. (see Figure 1)

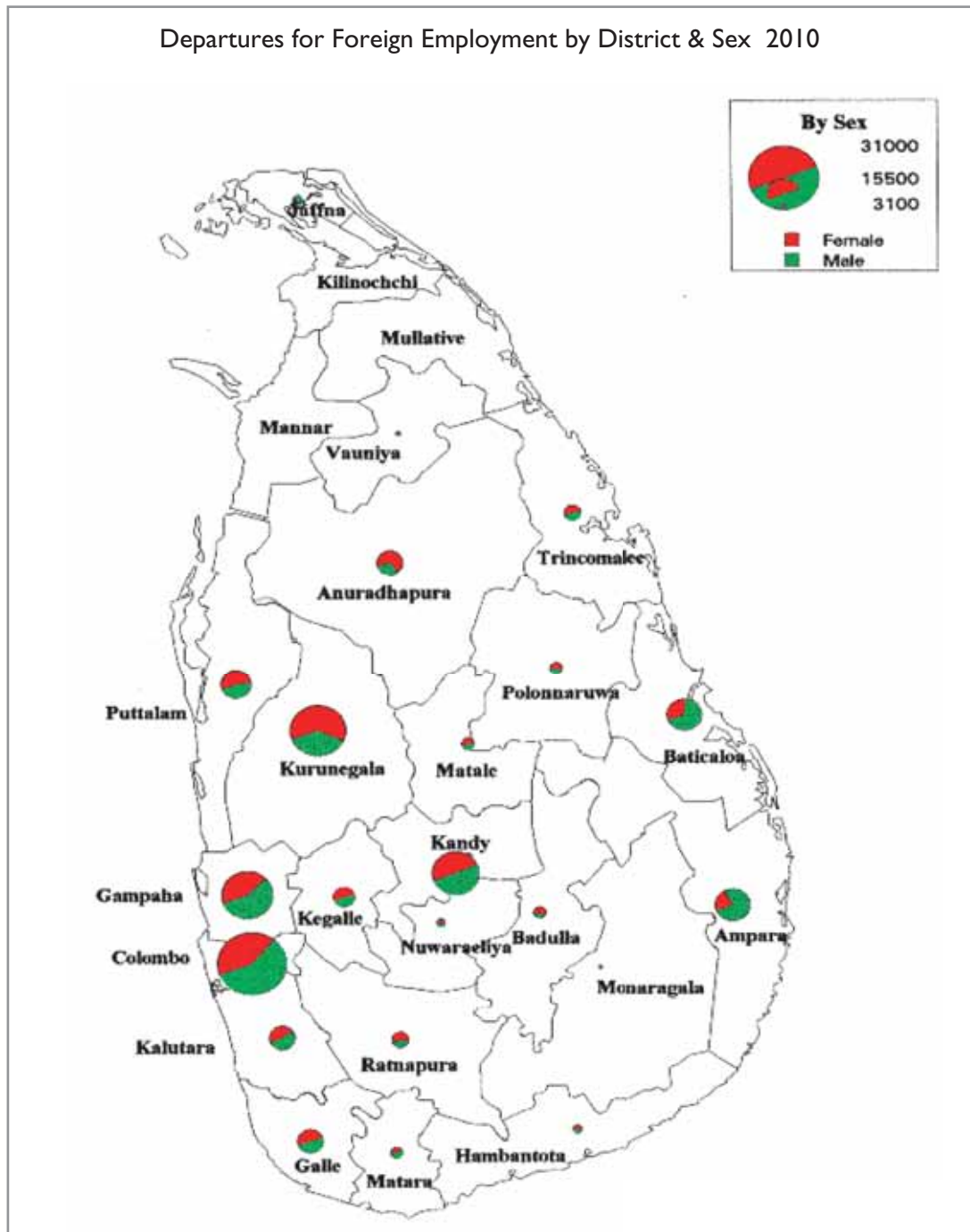
Recruitment of male migrant in 2011 has been increased compared to 2010. But the female recruitments have decreased by 2.7 percent.

Figure 2 shows the male and female departures in the year 2007 to 2011. The departures of female recorded in 2011 were less than what it in 2010. Male recruitments have nevertheless increased in 2011 comparing to 2010. According to the unpublished data of the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment, in 2012, Male departures have slightly decreased (less than 1%) and female departures have increased by 11,893.



According to 2007-2011 statistics, most of the female migrant workers were employed in Middle East. The diagram below provides the percentage of female workers distribution by continent from 2007-2011.

## Departures for Foreign Employment by District & Sex 2010



Source: Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment- Annual statistical Report 2012

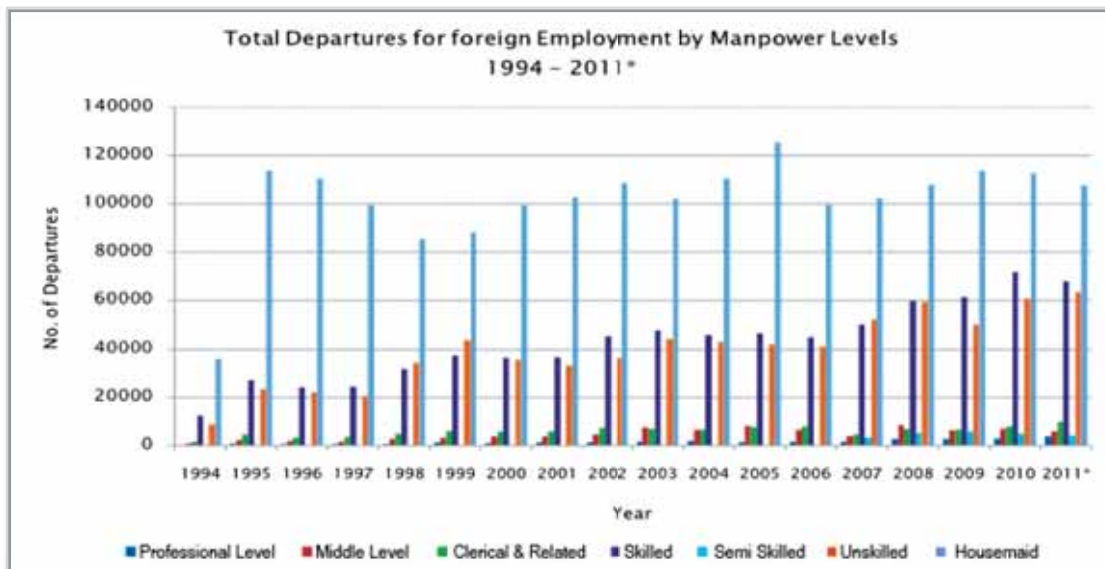
### DISTRICT WISE DEPARTURES:

Sri Lanka has 9 Provinces and 25 districts. The departures per district in the year 2011 are shown below:

Colombo district shows the highest departures for foreign employment during the period from 2007 to 2011. Departures for overseas employment of Gampaha district has been gradually increased from 17,936 in the year 2006 to 25,495 in the year 2010. This is a 42.1 percent increase. But foreign employment departures of Gampaha district have been decreased to 24,003 in 2011. It was decreased 5.9 percent led than 2010. It is significant that, Kurunegala district is continuing its increasing trend showed up to 2007 and in 2011 there is an increase of 2,970 persons. Kurunegala, Gampaha, Kandy, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam, Kalutara, Galle, Anuradhapura and Kegalle districts indicate relatively higher departure rates in year 2011

## Total departures for foreign Employment by Manpower Levels 1994-2011

From the total of the departures, 41 percent of the departures were as Housemaids and only 7 percent of females migrated for other work. Therefore housemaids accounted for 84.83 percent of the total female departures.



Source: Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment- Annual statistical Report 2012

The situation is different for housemaid jobs; According to the available statistics, the Sri Lanka Bureau for foreign employment has revealed that Kurunegala has the highest departures (13,033 persons) for housemaids. It was the highest departures for foreign employment by district and by man power level during the year 2011. Second highest record for housemaid departure is the Colombo district (10,125 persons)

In year 2011, majority of departures for foreign employment occurred among the age group 30-34 years similar to the last year. It was 51,581 persons in year 2011. The next highest recruited age group in 2011 was the 25-29 years. It was 51,283 persons in year 2011. The lowest migration showing in the age group 19 and below. This was only 3,915 persons only. This is a decrease from what it was in 2010 (34.5 percent decrease).

When considering the female departures, the highest numbers of migrants have been in the age group of 30-34 years. Secondly it has been the 40-44 age group that have had the highest. They have been 13,294 migrants from the age group 20-24 and 697 from the below 19 category which is slightly alarming.

# ANNEXURE - D

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